

ACT II] BEING EARNEST
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Algernon. Thank you. Might I have a buttonhole first? I never have any appetite unless I have a buttonhole first.

Cecily. A Marechal Niel? *[Picks up scissors.]*

Algernon. No., I'd sooner have a pink rose.

Cecily. Why? *[Cuts a flower.]*

Algernon. Because you are like a pink rose.

Cousin Cecily.

Cecily. I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.

Algernon. Then Miss Prism is a short-sighted old lady. *[Cecily puts the rose in his buttonhole.]* You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

Cecily. Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare.

Algernon. They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.

Cecily. Oh, I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man.

I shouldn't know what to talk to him about,

[They pass into the house. Miss Prism and Dr.

Chasuble return.]

Miss Prism. You are too much alone, dear Dr. Chasuble.

You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand—A

womanthrope, never!

Chasuble. *[With a scholar's shudder.]* Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase. The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church was distinctly against matrimony.

Miss Prism. *[Sententiously]* That is obviously the reason why

the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day.

And you do not seem to realize, dear Doctor, that by per-

sistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a

permanent public temptation. Men should be more careful;

this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray.

Chasuble. But is a man not equally attractive when married?

Miss Prism. No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

Chasuble. And often, I've been told, not even to her.

Miss Prism. That depends on the intellectual sympathies of

the woman. Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness

can be trusted. Young women are green. *[Dr. Chasuble*

starts] I spoke horticulturally. My metaphor was drawn

from fruits. But where is Cecily?

Chasuble. Perhaps she followed us to the schools.

Enter Jack slowly from the back of the garden.

He is dressed in

the deepest mourning, with crape hatband and black gloves.

Miss Prism. Mr. Worthing!

Chasuble. Mr. Worthing?